

## **Pascack Valley Towns Aim to Cut Costs**

**Wednesday, December 5, 2007**

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**Bergen Record**

PASCACK VALLEY -- Administrators in the Pascack Valley's 10 towns have formed a panel to identify ways in which they can share services.

"The ... mayors said they want to try to maximize shared services, because they all feel that there must be some opportunities to save money," Hillsdale Administrator Harold Karns said. "So they instructed the administrators to work together and meet to start developing ideas for them to consider."

The group, called the Pascack Valley Shared Services and Cooperative Purchasing Consortium, met for the first time last month and already has identified potential initiatives.

Westwood Administrator Robert Hoffmann leads a subcommittee trying to obtain a \$19,500 Bergen County grant to study joint-purchasing and equipment-sharing possibilities for their towns' public works departments.

"An outside consultant would come in and take an inventory of all the towns' equipment, looking at operations and what equipment is duplicated," Montvale Administrator Jack Doyle said.

The group also is looking at a joint road-resurfacing program for next year, led by Woodcliff Lake Administrator Ed Sandve.

"We are looking to have a common street-paving project where we can offer the towns a lower price by going out to bid together instead of each of us going it alone," Karns said.

Energy costs also are on the consortium's agenda.

"If we bid our energy as a group, we might be able to get a third party that would be so happy to get that volume of business, they would be able to give a better price than what we could get from a traditional utility," River Vale Mayor Joe Blundo said.

Karns said the towns are also looking at sharing banking services, an effort led by Emerson Administrator Joseph Scarpa.

"We're looking to see if by going out to bid jointly if we can get higher interest rates, better services and less fees from our banks," Scarpa said.

Chris Donnelly, a spokesman for the state's Department of Community Affairs, which administers the shared-services feasibility study grants, applauded the effort.

"Shared services can increase government efficiency, while at the same time helping reduce property tax burdens on local taxpayers," he said.

The Pascack Valley consortium joins other towns in Bergen County that have formed organizations to investigate shared services.

Hackensack, Rochelle Park, Maywood, Elmwood Park, Saddle Brook, Garfield, Fair Lawn and Paramus formed the Central Bergen Consortium a year ago to look into buying police cars and health insurance as a group.

The Northwest Bergen towns of Allendale, Franklin Lakes, Glen Rock, Ho-Ho-Kus, Mahwah, Midland Park, Oakland, Ramsey, Ridgewood, Saddle River, Upper Saddle River, Waldwick and Wyckoff have been working together on joint bids for road paving. In February, the towns signed a joint \$2.3 million contract for road work. Ramsey Administrator Nick Saros couldn't say how much the towns are saving, but he called it significant.

Blundo said he is happy with the Pascack panel's efforts.

"I think the towns have responsibilities to look for savings opportunities," Blundo said. "And the fact they are meeting formally on a regular basis, that in itself leads to conversation, dialogue and ideas."